

Here are some of the submissions from our seventeenth Invite to Write
inspired by *A Starry Night, Arles* by *Vincent van Gogh*:



My Grandmother's Tea Cup

My whole world as a child
was in that cup.
The embrace of warmth.
The smell of cinnamon.
The skill of receiving.

The sip,
taught me cherishing.
The colour of milk and tea gifted me comfort.
The thrill of knowing I would see,
such a signal,

that would nudge me further
into explorations of the
tenderness of life.
The exquisite effort of allowing
warm tea to move
from lips to tongue.
The feeling of my body
puddled and relaxed.

The beauty of the tea waves,
as they rhythmically hid and
revealed:
a star on the bottom of my
Grandmother's tea cup.

I unpack today.
A star in the middle of earned wisdom.
I am Skilled now in giving.
In the countenance of my own anguish.
The brightness of rising from Persephone's territory.

The ripeness of When: to give the cup.
The tea cup.
For my own Granddaughter,

who has heard the story many times.
Waits with imagination and joy.
For her own Grandmother;s cup
with a star at the bottom.
To be revealed
in her own timing of tea waves.

-Wendy Golden Levitt

The Sentinels

The spring sun has fallen beneath the treetops.
The palms and magnolias have become dark and radiant.
They have been turned to forms, shadows shining,
not only silhouettes; their texture flows in and out of light,
green darkness against the maize sky.
They stand glowing, still, swaying slowly,
guardians of the sky and coming night,
they call out more nearly to what is here:

a lone dandelion,
patches of dying grass,
and grass still glistening with life.

They sound what is near back to their perch
along the world's twilight edge,
now turning to face the vast, burgeoning sea,
night-blue with starglow,
and now turning toward the other worlds.
They send out their call again,
each a lighthouse
to stand above the sea,
to cast messages from home
into the reach of imagined stars.

Thus we behold the spring, the twilight,
the gathering of great distance into nearness.
We witness the passing of pale light into sea,
into the gaping silence of the horizon,
the chilling quiet
of what has always already been here,
waiting.

-Matthew Fishler

Starry Night Quartet

I. I saw that painting!

We were there, right?

walking along arm in arm

in the cold windy night?

The stars were there, right?

We looked up occasionally.

It seemed like a painting

of a cold windy night.

And then your phone rang and

We both paused, afraid

if you responded the night,

the painting, the stars

would vanish and

We would be blotted out.

II. It's so great to lie

on your back

on the grass

in your yard

with your Dad

and look at the stars.

Dad worked in a factory.
Mom worked at home.
I went to school and
on weekends we played
in the back yard with stars.

III. There's an app for that.
It locates me in the galaxy,
superimposes the constellations
so that I can relate
to something relatable
like people and animals
even if they're superimposed
on stars that are all dead.
We worship dead stars here,
and anticipate the new ones.

IV. What will happen when
kids can't see stars anymore
b/c the skies are too clogged
---- or their heads are ----
and the wondrous nights
are left unattended?

-Jennifer Fendya

Under a Star Studded Sky

Stars flicker, opening a portal of heart,
if one chooses to travel inside.
The ticket, a prayer or two whispered inside voice.
The destination, tranquility, wisdom and laughter.
Get quiet in breath to listen. To ride the wave towards harmony.

A trip needed to regain begins quickly below moon.
A journey, to meet ancestors perhaps who have wisdom.
A different excursion each night,
as one flies into heart with intention
intention, to understand ones purpose
under a star studded sky.
Under a star studded sky.

- Star Blossom

“THE FUTURE OF ALMOST INVINCIBLE DIFFICULTIES”:
ON VINCENT VAN GOGH’S “*STARRY NIGHT OVER THE RHÔNE*”

for Gisela, who saw the Milky Way that night

*

*When I have a terrible need of - shall I say the word – religion –
then I go out and paint the stars.*

- Vincent van Gogh

1.

Your paintings of stars speak not
of religion but an unrequited need
to feel God reach out, touch you,
bless you and salvage
your half-foundering reason.

From what dark reaches of the psyche
did your desperate need for stars

guide you to where there were none
amid the mapless regions of disarray.

2

This canvas is not a celebration
of an exquisite starlit night, gaslights
shimmering on the rippling river,
lovers lost in love dreaming
of a tender future meandering
toward pain, toward joy perhaps.

This is the icon of agony,
of journeying through a terrible region
lit only by your turbulent brush.

3.

“It’s better to have a gay life of it
than commit suicide,” you wrote.

You were less than two years away
from killing yourself.

And a million million stars
were unable to stop you.

Children of the Universal Fire

Be re-minded, dear friend —
Your life is fourteen billion years
In its making.

It has been that long
Since the primordial fire first burst forth,
Expanding the space of the universe
And gathering itself
Into innumerable spheres
Of inhuman powers and brilliance.

Hundreds of millions of years
Passed, and those first stars
Consumed themselves
Of their own volition,
Until they burst forth again,
With the elements of our bodies.

Their death also begat
More stars, our sun being one.
His simple presence
Gives light to our eyes,
Awakening us
To the mystery and the majesty
Of this our world.

And when he passes out of sight,
Darkening the immensity above,
We watch and ponder
His twinkling brothers and sisters,
Who have arranged themselves
In eternal patterns
That light the way of our dreams
And foretell the arc of our stories.

Do be re-minded, friend --
Your body is stardust,
Your soul sunshine,
Your visions constellations.

All of you,
Yes all of you,
Is of this universal fire.

- R. Douglas Saxen

Starry Night

Neurons glower on the velvety darkness of the celestial carpet,
Sending pulses of Re, rays of light--from light,
along the axon of her longest dendrite
A stretched sciatica, Geb's root, Thoth's delight.

Meanwhile, Cassiopeia, on her heavenly throne,
Pays tribute to the dreams of days past
Granting, fusing, scattering the bulbs of thought

And no-thought, through the collective window
Of the mortal race.

Nüt stretches out her limbs, wide and tight,
Also embossing the velvety skin with diamonds.
Lapiz Lazuli softens up its shell and melts profusely, joining in the
Gem-fest of her body.

Nüt, Nacht, Night, and Nuit,
A molten Lapiz Lazuli
A café-trottoire,
A set of rolling hills,
A house with a yellow-thatched roof,
All awaken, with delight
To be tattooed on a canvas of one starry night.

- Roula-Maria Dib